

Opinion

Letter: Pope's message on climate justice is encouraging but incomplete

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I love Pope Francis! For me, he is the most compelling figure since the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. I just finished reading the pope's message to the world on climate justice. I feel energized and have joined a group of people at my church, St. Joseph University Parish, who feel the same.

My only disappointment is the failure of the pope to hold up the example of native peoples around the world for their traditions of love and care of Creation. It is from them that we have learned how essential Earth and all its components – water, air, animals, plants of all kinds – are to our own survival. For thousands of years, they have modeled the respect and honor that we owe Creation.

Pope Francis could have taken this opportunity to rescind the Doctrine of Discovery, permission granted by popes in the 15th century for European explorers to claim lands and subjugate the people living there, leading to the genocide of millions of indigenous people. The influence of the Doctrine of Discovery continues to this day, enshrining discrimination against native peoples in the laws of the United States and many other countries.

Pope Francis could have used his moral influence to link concern for the current climate crisis with the need to oppose the ongoing violations of native peoples and the expropriation of their lands and resources. I hope and pray that this injustice will be included in everyone's discussions about the encyclical.

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